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MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(Prepared for the Meeting of Thursday, January 24, 1963, at 10 a.m)

FROM : Coordinator of Cuban Affairs

SUBJECT: Cuban Brigade

PROBLEM

To determine the future of the Cuban Brigade (participants in the Bay of Pigs invasion recently released from Cuban prisons), and other Cubans who participated in or trained for the invasion. To determine the future of existing Cuban training programs.

DISCUSSION

Approximately 1500 Cubans participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion (known as Brigade 2506), the great majority of whom were captured. In December 1962 over 1100 were released.

A decision on the future of the Cuban Brigade and other Cubans trained militarily by the U. S. must logically proceed from whatever over all policy the U. S. adopts toward Cuba.

A trained Cuban Brigade would be of relatively marginal military value because of its quantitative limitations and restricted military capability, but its

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-2-

politico-psychological value as a symbol of Cuban resistance to Castro/Communism may more than compensate for its limited military utility.

Any moral responsibility to the Brigade must be weighed.

COURSES OF ACTION

Three courses of action appear feasible with respect to the Brigade's future.

(1) Induce the Brigade to disband as a military unit, with no further U. S. special assistance.

If this policy were adopted, Brigade members and their families would be eligible for the benefits now accorded to all needy Cuban refugees in the Miami area (approximately 105,000). These benefits are equivalent to those received by American citizens in Dade County, Florida who are in need. The principal ones include: financial grants of up to \$100 per month for a family and up to \$60 a month for an individual; hospitalization and out-patient facilities at county and private hospitals for acute illnesses; distribution of surplus food commodities; employment counseling; resettlement, including transportation and a transition grant; foster care for unaccompanied children; special English and refresher courses for doctors and lawyers at University of Miami; a student loan program for Cubans attending U. S. universities provides up to \$1,000 a year; supplemental assistance to Dade County, Florida, is provided by HEW to cover 50 percent of cost of educating Cuban refugee children in primary and secondary schools; payment for a substantial part of special language courses and vocational training; and physical examinations and inoculations at time of entry into the U. S.

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DOD has a program providing for enlistment in the U. S. Army of those Cuban nationals between the ages of 18 and 30 who pass entrance requirements. (A similar program for the Navy covers ages 18-26). The program provides 20-22 weeks of training at the conclusion of which they are transferred as individuals to U. S. Reserve status. They are not required to know English. A two week period for resettlement is also provided at the termination of the training.

Another DOD program enables former officers of the Cuban Army, Navy and Air Force to volunteer on a highly selective basis for programs in the U. S. Armed Forces. Training periods are from 20 to 36 weeks. English is necessary. The officers are in civilian status. They receive a salary from the Cuban Revolutionary Council and a per diem through DOD from AID funds which are no longer available.

Considerations:

This course of action would provide the simplest and most economical way of disposing of the problem, provide equal treatment for all eligible Cuban refugees; equivalent to benefits offered to American citizens.

Individual Cubans could continue to be accepted for service in the U. S. Armed Forces and their language, skill and country knowledge could be distributed through various U. S. units which might be used in an invasion.

The unsatisfactory aspects of this course are that it would appear to run counter to expectations of the Brigade as a result of Administration statements and actions; it would result in substantial loss of whatever "mystique" the Brigade possesses, which might be useful in unifying Cuban refugees; and a phasing out of this kind would probably engender some adverse political reaction domestically as well as from the Brigade and its sympathizers. Also it might have an undesirable effect on opinion in Latin America and other parts of the Free World concerning the determination of the United States

to unseat the Castro regime, and would lend weight to arguments that the U. S. may be leaning toward coexistence with the Castro regime.

(2) Train the Brigade and Cubans in training as a unit. Maintain and support them as a military reserve component of the U. S. Armed Forces.

Considerations:

Under this course of action whatever "mystique" the Brigade possesses in the anti-Castro community could perhaps be exploited in the struggle for Cuban liberation, and used to bring about greater unity in the Cuban anti-Castro exile community.

It would constitute an immediate political and psychological advantage by demonstrating to the Cubans within Cuba, to the Cuban exile community, and to Latin Americans, the U. S. determination to establish a striking force symbolic of U. S. intent to overthrow the present Cuban regime.

It would satisfy one of the principal desires expressed by top Brigade leaders and would promote prestige and esprit among its members. It would appear to be in consonance with the statements and actions of the Administration in connection with the future of the Brigade.

But it would inevitably become a focal point for Cuban exile political activities in the Miami area, and morale, discipline and esprit would be difficult to maintain over the long term without early employment to retake Cuba. It could generate domestic political and military criticism by incorporating organized alien groups in the U. S. armed forces reserve component. There is a

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risk that an impulsive, irrational act by Brigade members, as members of the U. S. reserve forces, could be a source of serious embarrassment to the U. S .

(3) Tailor a special civilian and military program for Brigade members. Encourage the Brigade to continue as a "fraternal" unit similar to the "Flying Tigers". Encourage those Brigade members who enter the current military training program for Cubans to establish a Brigade military reserve component which other U. S. militarily-trained Cubans could join.

Under existing authority, HEW could provide the following additional benefits for Brigade members in need, over and above those now offered: special employment counseling and placement service; extended student loans to provide for all institutional costs such as tuition, books, etc., even if this exceeds \$1,000 per year (living costs to be provided by another agency); expanded vocational training in the Miami area; increased financial assistance to needy persons while in training; increased distribution of surplus food (with approval of the Department of Agriculture).

The following additional programs could be undertaken by HEW upon Presidential determination that such action would contribute to the defense and security of the United States or advance its foreign policy interests: scholarship grants for students; loans for vocational training anywhere in the United States; an expanded training program similar to a G. I. Bill of Rights, in the United States and/or abroad. The cost of these additional programs, assuming an expenditure of \$2,500 per person per year would be about \$2.5 million.

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-6-

A military component of a specially tailored program would enable Brigade members to enlist in the U. S. Army in the same manner as have other Cuban refugees (about 2000 are now at Fort Jackson, South Carolina). Special arrangements could be made for professional military officers who desired officer training, similar to that now being offered Cuban exile officers in the U. S. armed forces. Individuals trained in this manner might later create or join units, and serve to perpetuate the Brigade unity and "mystique".

Considerations:

A specially tailored program would fulfill any "moral" obligations of the U. S. toward Brigade members and mitigate inevitable complaints.

It would give members their choice of selecting a useful civilian occupation or service in U. S. Armed Forces, weeding out the Brigade and allowing those who want to continue the Brigade as a military unit to pursue this desire through joining a reserve unit after training, thus preserving their core.

It would tend to disperse Brigade members geographically and in different activities, thus effectively disbanding the present entire Brigade as a unit.

Cuban refugees in general might resent special assistance given Brigade members, but probably not if this assistance included the health and educational fields.

HEW would have to set up a special benefit structure, and it should be noted that the additional cost of these programs would have to be met out of current operating funds.

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-7-

Establishment of additional programs, after a Presidential determination, would increase costs even more, and be subject to wider criticism as "unnecessary" privileges for Brigade members.

COORDINATORS'S RECOMMENDATION

1. I recommend course (3), a specially tailored program for Brigade members.
2. I recommend against a Presidential determination providing broader privileges for Brigade members.
3. I recommend no change in existing U. S. military training programs for Cubans, except that a Brigade reserve unit should be authorized and other Cuban reservists should be permitted to join.
4. I recommend that the Brigade be induced rather than forced to accept this proposal, and intend to arrange consultation with them immediately if this course of action is approved.

Rationale

Lacking an immediate military use for the Brigade we should disband the Brigade as such. Since we may in the future desire the presence in the U. S. Armed Forces of militarily-trained Cubans, we should encourage Brigade members to enlist in the existing military training program for Cubans and to enter a U. S. Reserve Unit thereafter.

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- 8 -

Our programs should be designed to encourage the Brigade members to melt back into the exile community and engage in constructive pursuits pending the liberation of Cuba. We should offer them some special assistance but not to the extent that they become a perpetual privileged class within the community. Presidential action on their behalf would single them out unnecessarily.

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